

REMARKS

In the Office Action of August 17, 2004, claims 1-25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Kitchen et al. (USP 6,289,322) in view of Remington et al. (USP 6,070,150).

As the Examiner appreciates, Kitchen describes a centralized bill presentment and payment system in which bills are aggregated at a central CF station 140 from biller station 110a-d and presented to payor stations 120a-d for review and payment. Payment instructions are received at the central CF station from the payor stations and are executed by the CF station at financial institutions FI stations 130a-c. The centralized nature of Kitchen's system is readily apparent from his Figure 2 which shows a variety of biller stations, payor stations and FI stations disposed around a single CF station 140 at the center.

Applicant's invention, however, is a system that does not use a centralized system for distributing bills. Rather, bills are prepared by billers and provided to clients by the billers without the services of a bill processing server. This avoids the need for contractual arrangements between the billers and a centralized billing service and gives the biller control of billing formats and what is presented to his clients. The bills include payment instructions illustratively embedded in HTML code and means for activating such instructions, illustratively in the form of an icon displayed in the bill. The instructions are addressed to a bill processing server that causes the bill to be paid by debiting the client's account and crediting the biller's account.

To make up for the deficiencies of Kitchen the Examiner relies on Figure 4 of Remington which discloses a system in which bills are presented by the biller to the consumer at step 132 and payment instructions are transmitted by the consumer back to the biller at step 134. This system, however, does not teach or suggest that the bill payment instructions be communicated from the client computer to the bill processing server as recited in applicant's independent claims 1 and 14. Rather, it reaches away from such a centralized arrangement by providing for return of the payment instructions to the biller.

The differences between applicant's invention and the references are emphasized in the third, fourth and fifth wherein clauses in applicant's claim 1. Specifically, the third clause specifies that the client computer receives and views bill information from a biller server and not from a bill processing server while the fourth clause specifies that the processor integral to the client computer communicates bill payment instructions to the bill processing server and the fifth clause specifies that the bill processing server causes accounts to be debited and credited upon receipt of the bill payment instructions. Similar limitations are found in paragraphs b, f and g of claim 14.

Since Kitchen and Remington do not reach or suggest a system or method that operates in this way, claims 1 and 14 are believed patentable. Dependent claims 2 - 13 and 15 - 25 are believe patentable for the same reasons claims 1 and 14 are patentable.

In view of the forgoing remarks, the claims in this application are believed to be in condition for allowance. Such action is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes a telephone interview would expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to call applicants' attorney at the number given below.

Respectfully submitted,

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